

STATE SECRETS

FOR THE PEOPLE.

THE

PRIVATE LETTERS

OF

LIEUT.-GENERAL SCOTT,

AND THE REPLY OF

EX-PRESIDENT BUCHANAN.

NEW YORK:

HAMILTON, JOHNSON, & FARRELLY, PUBLISHERS,

NO. 22 ANN STREET.

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Early in the year 1861, when civil war seemed impending but had not actually broken out, Gen. Scott, then at the head of the army, wrote two papers containing his views, professional and political, on the crisis, and the rights and duties which devolved on the Government in the momentous conjuncture. These two papers were subsequently lent to many friends to read, and one of them has recently been published, without the writer's consent. Therefore, the Old Warrior has deemed it proper to give to the public himself the second of the papers referred to, lest it also might find its unauthorized way into print. He has, therefore, forwarded it to the *National Intelligencer*, having added to it a few explanatory "notes," which the lapse of time seemed to render proper.

The paper now submitted to the public by Gen. Scott throws a flood of light on the history of the rebellion in its incipient stages, and will inspire every reader with deep interest. It establishes, in the first place, the patriotic anxiety of the wise and watchful General-in-Chief to prepare for the coming storm, and his earnest and repeated efforts to prevail on the Government to garrison and secure the Southern forts against every possible attack. This paper must have the effect, with every candid mind, of vindicating the character of the illustrious veteran General himself from imputations with which he has been assailed.

GENERAL SCOTT'S LETTERS.

October 30, 1860, I emphatically called the attention of the President to the necessity of strong garrisons in all the forts below the principal commercial cities of the Southern States, including, by name, the forts in Pensacola harbor. October 31, I suggested to the Secretary of War that a circular should be sent at once to such of those forts as had garrisons to be on the alert against surprises and sudden assaults.—(*See my Views, since printed.*)

After a long confinement to my bed in New York, I came to this city (Washington) December 12. Next day I personally urged upon the Secretary of War the same views, viz: strong garrisons in the Southern forts—those of Charleston and Pensacola harbors, at once; those of Mobile Bay and the Mississippi, below New Orleans, next, &c. I again pointed out the organized companies and the recruits at the principal depots available for the purpose. The Secretary did not concur in any of my views, when I begged him to procure for me an early interview with the President, that I might make one effort more to save the forts and the Union.

By appointment, the Secretary accompanied me to the President, December 15, when the same topics, secessionism, &c., were again pretty fully discussed. There being at the moment [in the opinion of the President] no danger of an early secession, beyond South Carolina, the President, in reply to my arguments for immediately reinforcing Fort Moultrie and sending a garrison to Fort Sumter, said:

“The time had not arrived for doing so; that he should wait the action of the Convention of South Carolina, in the expectation that a commission would be appointed and sent to negotiate with him and Congress respecting the secession of the State and the property of the United States held within its limits; and, that if Congress should decide against the secession, then he would send a reinforcement and telegraph the commanding officer (Major Anderson) of Fort Moultrie to hold the forts (Moultrie and Sumter) against attack.”

And the Secretary, with animation, added :

"We have a vessel of war (the Brooklyn) held in readiness at Norfolk, and he would then send three hundred men in her from Fort Monroe to Charleston."

To which I replied, first, that so many men could not be withdrawn from that garrison, but could be taken from New York. Next, that it would then be too late, as the South Carolina Commissioners would have the game in their hands, by first using and then cutting the wires; that as there was not a soldier in Fort Sumter, any handful of armed secessionists might seize and occupy it, &c., &c.

Here the remark may be permitted that if the Secretary's three hundred men had then, or some time later, been sent to Forts Moultrie and Sumter, *both* would now have been in the possession of the United States, and not a battery below them could have been erected by the secessionists; consequently the access to those forts from the sea would now (the end of March) be unobstructed and free*

The same day, December 15, I wrote the following note :

"Lieut. Gen. Scott begs the President to pardon him for supplying, in this note, what he omitted to say this morning at the interview with which he was honored by the President.

"Long *prior* to the *force bill*, (March 2d, 1833,) *prior* to the issue of his proclamation, and in part *prior* to the passage of the ordinance of nullification, President Jackson, under the act of March 3, 1807, 'authorizing the employment of the land and naval forces,' caused reinforcements to be sent to Fort Moultrie, and a sloop-of-war, (the Natchez,) with two revenue cutters, to be sent to Charleston harbor, in order, 1, to prevent the seizure of that fort by the nullifiers, and 2, to enforce the execution of the revenue laws. Gen. Scott himself arrived at Charleston the day after the passage of the ordinance of nullification, and many of the additional companies were then en route for the same destination.

"President Jackson familiarly said at the time 'that, by the assemblage of those forces, for lawful purposes, *he* was not making

* "The plan invented by Gen. Scott to stop secession was, like all campaigns devised by him, very able in its details, and nearly certain of general success. The Southern States are full of arsenals and forts, commanding their rivers and strategic points. Gen. Scott desired to transfer the army of the United States to these forts as speedily and as quietly as possible. The Southern States could not cut off communication between the Government and the fortresses without a great fleet, which they cannot build for years, or take them by land without one hundred thousand men, many hundred millions of dollars, several campaigns, and many a bloody siege. Had General Scott been able to have got these forts in the condition he desired them to be, the Southern Confederacy would not now exist."—*Part of the eulogy pronounced on Secretary Floyd (who defeated Scott's plans) by the Richmond Examiner, on Floyd's reception at that city.*

war upon South Carolina ; but that if South Carolina attacked them, it would be South Carolina that made war upon the United States.'

"Gen. S., who received his first instructions (oral) from the President, in the temporary absence of the Secretary of War, (Gen. Cass,) remembers those expressions well.

"Saturday night, December 15, 1860."

DECEMBER 28.—Again, after Major Anderson had gallantly and wisely thrown his handful of men from Fort Moultrie into Fort Sumter—learning that, on demand of South Carolina, there was great danger he might be ordered by the Secretary back to the less tenable work, or *out* of the harbor—I wrote this note :

"Lieut. Gen. Scott (who has had a bad night, and can scarcely hold up his head this morning) begs to express the hope to the Secretary of War—1. That orders may not be given for the evacuation of Fort Sumter. 2. That one hundred and fifty recruits may instantly be sent from Governor's Island to reinforce that garrison, with ample supplies of ammunition and subsistence, including fresh vegetables, as potatoes, onions, turnips ; and, 3. That one or two armed vessels be sent to support the said fort.

"Lieut. Gen. S. avails himself of this opportunity also to express the hope that the recommendations heretofore made by him to the Secretary of War respecting Forts Jackson, St. Philip, Morgan, and Pulaski, and particularly in respect to Forts Pickens and McRae, and the Pensacola Navy Yard, in connection with the last two named works, may be reconsidered by the Secretary.

"Lieut. Gen. S. will further ask the attention of the Secretary to Forts Jefferson and Taylor, which are wholly *national*—being of far greater value even to the most distant points of the Atlantic coast and the people on the upper waters of the Missouri, Mississippi, and Ohio rivers than to the State of Florida. There is only a feeble company at Key West for the defence of Fort Taylor, and not a soldier in Fort Jefferson to resist a handful of fillibusters, or a row-boat of pirates ; and the Gulf, soon after the beginning of secession or revolutionary troubles in the adjacent States, will swarm with such nuisances."*

DECEMBER 30.—I addressed the President again, as follows :

"Lieutenant General Scott begs the President of the United States to pardon the irregularity of this communication. It is Sunday, the weather is bad, and General S. is not well enough to go to church.

* It was not till January 4 that, by the aid of Secretary Holt, (a strong and loyal man,) I obtained permission to send succor to the feeble garrison of Fort Taylor, Key West, and at the same time a company—Major Arnold's, from Boston—to occupy Fort Jefferson, Tortugas Island. If this company had been three days later, the fort would have been pre-occupied by Floridians. It is known that the rebels had their eyes upon those powerful forts, which govern the commerce of the Mexican Gulf, as Gibraltar and Malta govern that of the Mediterranean. With Forts Jefferson and Taylor, the rebels might have purchased an early European recognition.

"But matters of the highest national importance seem to forbid a moment's delay, and, if misled by zeal, he hopes for the President's forgiveness.

"Will the President permit General S., without reference to the War Department, and otherwise as secretly as possible, to send two hundred and fifty recruits from New York harbor to reinforce Fort Sumter, together with some extra muskets or rifles, ammunition, and subsistence ?

"It is hoped that a sloop of war and cutter may be ordered for the same purpose as early as to-morrow.

"General S. will wait upon the President at any moment he may be called for."

The South Carolina Commissioners had already been many days in Washington, and no movement of defence (on the part of the United States) was permitted.

I will here close my notice of Fort Sumter by quoting from some of my previous reports.

It would have been easy to reinforce this fort down to about the 12th of February. In this long delay Fort Moultrie had been re-armed and greatly strengthened in every way by the rebels. Many powerful new land batteries (besides a formidable raft) have been constructed. Hulks, too, have been sunk in the principal channel so as to render access to Fort Sumter from the sea impracticable without first carrying all the lower batteries of the secessionists. The difficulty of reinforcing has thus been increased ten or twelve fold. First, the late President refused to allow any attempt to be made because he was holding negotiations with the South Carolina Commissioners.

Afterwards, Secretary Holt and myself tried, in vain, to obtain a ship of war for the purpose, and were finally obliged to employ the passenger-steamer "*Star of the West*." That vessel, but for the hesitation of the master, might, as is generally believed, have delivered at the fort the men and subsistence on board. This attempt at succor failing, I next, verbally, submitted to the late Cabinet either that succor be sent by ships of war, fighting their way by the batteries, (increasing in strength daily,) or that Major Anderson should be left to ameliorate his condition by the muzzles of his guns—that is, enforcing supplies by bombardment and by *bringing to* merchant vessels, helping himself, (giving orders for payment,) or, finally, be allowed to evacuate the fort, which, in that case, would be inevitable.

But, before any resolution was taken, the late Secretary of the

Navy making difficulties about the want of suitable war vessels, another Commissioner from South Carolina arrived, causing further delay. When this had passed away Secretaries Holt and Toucey, Captain Ward, of the Navy, and myself—with the knowledge of the President (Buchanan)—settled upon the employment, under the Captain, (who was eager for the expedition,) of three or four small steamers belonging to the Coast Survey. At that time (late in January) I have but little doubt Captain Ward would have reached Fort Sumter, with all his vessels. But he was kept back by something like a *truce* or armistice, [made here] embracing Charleston and Pensacola harbors, agreed upon between the late President and certain principal seceders of South Carolina, Florida, Louisiana, &c., and this truce lasted to the end of that Administration.

That plan and all others, without a squadron of war ships and a considerable army—competent to take and hold the many formidable batteries below Fort Sumter, and before the exhaustion of its subsistence—having been pronounced, from the change of circumstances, impracticable, by Major Anderson, Captain Foster, (Chief Engineer,) and all the other officers of the fort, as well as by Brigadier General Totten, Chief of the Corps of Engineers; and, concurring in that opinion, I did not hesitate to advise, (March 12th) that Major Anderson be instructed to evacuate the fort, so long gallantly held by him and his companions, immediately on procuring suitable transportation to take them to New York. His relative weakness had steadily increased in the last eighteen days.

It was not till January 3d (when the *first* Commissioners from South Carolina withdrew) that the permission I had solicited October 31st was obtained, to admonish commanders of the few Southern forts with garrisons to be on the alert against surprises and sudden assaults. (Major Anderson was not among the admonished being already straitly beleaguered.)

JANUARY 3d. To Lieut. Slemmer, commanding in Pensacola Harbor:

"The General-in-Chief directs that you take measures to do the utmost in your power to prevent the seizure of either of the forts in Pensacola harbor, by surprise or assault, consulting first with the commander of the navy yard, who will probably have received instructions to co-operate with you." (This order was signed by Aid-de-Camp Lay.)

It was just before the surrender of the Pensacola navy yard (January 12) that Lieut. Slemmer, calling upon Com. Armstrong, ob-

tained the aid of some thirty common seamen or laborers, (but no marines) which, added to his forty-six soldiers, made up his numbers to seventy-six men, with whom this meritorious officer has since held Fort Pickens, and performed, working night and day, an immense amount of labor in mounting guns, keeping up a strong guard, &c., &c.

Early in January I renewed, as has been seen, my solicitations to be allowed to reinforce Fort Pickens, but a good deal of time was lost in vacillations. First, the President "thought if no movement is made by the United States, Fort McRae will probably not be occupied nor Fort Pickens attacked. In case of movements by the United States, which will doubtless be made known by the wires, there will be corresponding local movements, and the attempt to reinforce will be useless."—(*Quotation from a note made by Aid-de-Camp Lay, about January 12, of the President's reply to a message from me.*) Next, it was doubted whether it would be safe to send reinforcements in an unarmed steamer, and the want, *as usual*, of a suitable naval vessel—the Brooklyn being long held in reserve at Norfolk for some purpose unknown to me. Finally, after I had kept a body of three hundred recruits in New York harbor ready for some time—and they would have been sufficient to reinforce temporarily Fort Pickens and to occupy Fort McRae also—the President, about January 18, permitted that the sloop of war Brooklyn should take a single company, ninety men, from Fort Monroe, Hampton Roads, and reinforce Lieutenant Slemmer, in Fort Pickens, but without a surplus man for the neighboring fort, McRae.

The Brooklyn, with Capt. Vodges' company alone, left the Chesapeake for Fort Pickens about January 22d, and, on the 29th, President Buchanan, having entered into a *quasi* armistice with certain leading seceders at Pensacola and elsewhere, caused Secretaries Holt and Toucey to instruct, in a joint note, the commanders of the war vessels, off Pensacola and Lieut. Slemmer, commanding Fort Pickens, to commit no act of hostility, and not to land Capt. Vodges' company unless that fort should be attacked. *

[That joint note I never saw until March 25th, but supposed the

* It was known at the Navy Department that the Brooklyn, with Capt. Vogdes on board, would be obliged in open sea to stand off and on Fort Pickens, and in rough weather might sometimes be fifty miles off. Indeed, if ten miles at sea, the fort might have been attacked and easily carried before the reinforcement could have reached the beach, in open sea, where alone it could land.

armistice was consequent upon the meeting of the Peace Convention at Washington, and was understood to terminate with it.]

Hearing however, of the most active preparations for hostilities on the part of the seceders at Pensacola, by the erection of new batteries and arming Fort McRae—that had not a gun mounted when it was seized—during the Peace Convention and since, I brought the subject to the notice of the new Administration, when this note, dated March 12th, to Capt. Vogdes was agreed upon, viz : “At the first favorable moment you will land with your company, reinforce Fort Pickens, and hold the same till further orders.” This order, in duplicate, left New York by two naval vessels about the middle of March, as the mail and the wires could not be trusted, and detached officers could not be substituted, for two had already been arrested and paroled by the authorities at Pensacola, despatches taken from one of them, and a third, to escape like treatment, forced to turn back when near that city. Thus those authorities have not ceased to make war upon the United States since the capture by them of the navy yard, January 12th.

Respectfully submitted.

WINFIELD SCOTT.

*Headquarters of the Army,
Washington, March 30th 1861.*

In giving the above paper, at the instance of Gen Scott, it may not be improper to publish the following letter, referred to as the one which has appeared in print without his authority, and which, it is asserted in the public papers, the Secretary of State, to whom the letter was written, denies any instrumentality in making public:

WASHINGTON, MARCH 3, 1861.

Dear Sir :—Hoping that in a day or two the new President will have happily passed through all personal dangers, and find himself installed and the honored successor of the great Washington, with you as the chief of his Cabinet, I beg leave to repeat, in writing, what I have before said to you orally, this supplement to my printed “views,” (dated in October last) on the highly disordered condition of our (so late) happy and glorious Union.

To meet the extraordinary exigencies of the times, it seems to me that I am guilty of no arrogance in limiting the President's field of selection to one of the four plans of procecdure subjoined :

I. Throw off the old and assume a new designation—the Union party : adopt the conciliatory measures proposed by Mr. Critten-

den or the Peace Convention, and my life upon it, we shall have no new case of secession ; but, on the contrary, an early return of many if not of all the States which have already broken off from the Union. Without some equally benign measure, the remaining Slaveholding States will probably join the Montgomery Confederacy in less than sixty days : when this city, being included in a foreign country, would require a permanent garrison of at least thirty-five thousand troops to protect the Government within it.

II. Collect the duties on foreign goods outside the ports of which the Government has lost the command, or close such ports by act of Congress and blockade them.

III. Conquer the Seceded States by invading armies. No doubt this might be done in two or three years by a young and able General—a Wolfe, a Dessaix, a Hoche—with three hundred thousand disciplined men, estimating a third for garrisons, and the loss of a yet greater number by skirmishes, sieges, battles, and Southern fevers. The destruction of life and property on the other side would be frightful, however perfect the moral discipline of the invaders.

The conquest completed, at that enormous waste of human life to the North and Northwest, with at least \$250 000 000 added thereto, and *cui bono* ? Fifteen devastated provinces ! not to be brought into harmony with their conquerors, but to be held for generations by heavy garrisons, at an expense quadruple the nett duties or taxes which it would be possible to extort from them, followed by a Protector or an Emperor.

IV. Say to the Seceded States, Wayward sisters, depart in peace.

In haste, I remain, very truly yours.

WINFIELD SCOTT.

HON. WILLIAM H. SEWARD, &c., &c.

EX-PRESIDENT BUCHANAN'S REPLY.

To the Editors of the National Intelligencer :

On Wednesday last I received the *National Intelligencer* containing General SCOTT's address to the public. This is throughout an undisguised censure of my conduct during the last months of the Administration, in regard to the seven Cotton States, now in rebellion. From our past relations I was greatly surprised at the appearance of such a paper. In one aspect, however, it was highly gratifying. It has justified me, nay, it has rendered it absolutely necessary, that I should no longer remain silent in respect to charges which have been long vaguely circulating, but are now endorsed by the responsible name of General Scott.

I.—The first and most prominent among these charges is my refusal to immediately garrison nine enumerated fortifications, scattered over six of the Southern States, according to the recommendation of General Scott, in his "views" addressed to the War Department on the 29th and 30th of October, 1860. And it has even been alleged that if this had been done it might have prevented the civil war.

This refusal is attributed, without the least cause, to the influence of Governor Floyd. All my Cabinet must bear me witness that I was the President myself, responsible for all the acts of the Administration; and certain it is that during the last six months previous to the 29th December, 1860, the day on which he resigned his office, after my request, he exercised less influence on the Administration than any other member of the Cabinet. Mr. Holt was immediately thereafter transferred from the Post Office Department to that of War; so that, from this time until the 4th of March, 1861, which was by far the most important period of the Administration, he performed the duties of Secretary of War to my entire satisfaction.

But why did I not immediately garrison these nine fortifications

in such a manner, to use the language of General Scott, "as to make any attempt to take any one of them by surprise or coup-de-main ridiculous?" There is one answer both easy and conclusive, even if other valid reasons did not exist. There were no available troops within reach which could be sent to these fortifications. To have attempted a military operation on a scale so extensive by any means within the President's power would have been simply absurd. Of this General Scott himself seems to have been convinced, for on the day after the date of his first "views" he addressed (on the 30th October) supplemental views to the War Department, in which he states: "*There is one (regular) company in Boston, one here, (at the Narrows,) one at Pittsburgh, one at Augusta, (Ga.,) one at Baton Rouge*"—*in all five companies only within reach to garrison or reinforce the forts mentioned in the "views."*

Five companies—four hundred men—to occupy and reinforce nine fortifications in six highly excited Southern States! The force "within reach" was so entirely inadequate that nothing more need be said on the subject. To have attempted such a military operation with so feeble a force, and the Presidential election impending, would have been an invitation to collision and secession. Indeed, if the whole American army, consisting then of only sixteen thousand men, had been "within reach," they would have been scarcely sufficient for this purpose. Such was our want of troops that, although General Scott, believing, in opposition to the opinion of the Committee raised in the House of Representatives, that the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln might be interrupted by military force, was only able to assemble at Washington, so late as the 4th March, six hundred and fifty-three men, rank and file of the army; and, to make up this number, even the sappers and miners were brought from West Point.

But why was there no greater force within reach? This question could be better answered by General Scott himself than by any other person. Our small regular army, with the exception of a few hundred men, were out of reach, on our remote frontiers, where it had been continuously stationed for years, to protect the inhabitants and the emigrants on their way thither against the attacks of hostile Indians. All were insufficient, and both General Scott and myself had endeavored in vain to prevail upon Congress to raise several additional regiments for this purpose. In recommending this augmentation of the army, the General states in his report to

the War Department of November, 1857, that "it would not more than furnish the reinforcements now greatly need in Florida, Texas, New Mexico, California, Oregon, Washington (T.) Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, leaving not a company for Utah." And, again, in his report of November, 1858, he says:

"This want of troops to give reasonable security to our citizens in distant settlements, including emigrants on the plains, can scarcely be too strongly stated; but I will only add, that as often as we have been obliged to withdraw troops from one frontier in order to reinforce another, the weakened points have been instantly attacked or threatened with formidable invasion."

These "views" of General Scott exhibit the crude notions then prevailing even among intelligent and patriotic men on this subject of secession. In the first sentence the General, whilst stating that "to save time the right of secession may be conceded," yet immediately says "this is instantly balanced by the correlative right on the part of the Federal Government against an *interior* State or States to re-establish by force, if necessary, its former continuity of territory." (For this he cites "Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy, last chapter." It may be there, but I have been unable to find it.) Whilst it is difficult to ascertain his precise meaning in this passage, he renders what he did *not* mean quite clear in his supplementary "views." In these he says: "It will be seen that the 'views' only apply to a case of secession that makes a *gap* in the present Union. The falling off, say of Texas, or of all the Atlantic States, from the Potomac south, (the very case which has occurred) was not within the scope of General S.'s "provisional remedies;" that is to say, to establish by force, if necessary, the continuity of our territory. In his 'views' he also states as follows: "But break this glorious Union by whatever line or lines that political madness may contrive, and there would be no hope of recruiting the fragments except by the laceration and despotism of the sword. To effect such result the intestine wars of our Mexican neighbors would, in comparison with ours, sink into mere child's play." In the General's opinion "a smaller evil (than these intestine wars) would be to allow the fragments of the great Republic to form themselves into new Confederacies, probably four." He then points out what ought to be the boundaries between the new Unions; and at the end of each goes so far as even to indicate the cities which ought to be the capitals of the three first on this side of the Rocky mountains, to wit, "Columbia, South Carolina," "Alton or Quincy,"

Illinois," and "Albany, New York," excluding Washington city altogether. This indication of capitals, contained in the original, now in my possession, is curiously omitted in the version published in the National Intelligencer. He designates no capital for the fourth Union on the Pacific. The reader will judge what encouragement these views, proceeding from so distinguished a source, must have afforded to the secessionists of the Cotton States.

I trust I have said enough, and more than enough, to convince every mind why I did not, with a force of five companies, attempt to reinforce Forts Jackson and St. Philip, on the Mississippi; Fort Morgan, below Mobile; Forts Pickens and McRae, in Pensacola Harbor; Fort Pulaski, below Savannah; Forts Moultrie and Sumter, Charleston Harbor, and Fort Monroe, in Virginia.

These "views," both original and supplementary, were published by General Scott in the National Intelligencer of January 1861, at the most important and critical period of the Administration. Their publication, at that time, could do no possible good, and might do much harm. To have published them, without the President's knowledge and consent, was as much in violation of the sacred confidence which ought to prevail between the commanding General of the army and the Commander-in-Chief as it would have been for the Secretary of War to publish the same documents without his authority. What is of more importance, their publication was calculated injuriously to affect the compromise measures then pending before Congress and the country, and to encourage the secessionists in their mad and wicked attempt to shatter the Union into fragments. From the great respect which I then entertained for the General I passed it over in silence.

It is worthy of remark that soon after the Presidential election, representations of what those "views" contained, of more or less correctness, were unfortunately circulated, especially throughout the South. The Editors of the National Intelligencer, in assigning a reason for their publication, state that both in public prints and in public speeches, allusions had been made to them, and some misapprehensions of their character had got abroad.

II. and III General Scott states that he arrived in Washington on the 12th, and, accompanied by the Secretary of War, held a conversation with the President on the 15th December. Whilst I have no recollection whatever of this conversation, he doubtless states correctly that I did refuse to send three hundred men to reinforce

Major Anderson at Fort Moultrie, who had not then removed to Fort Sumter. The reason for this refusal is manifest to all who recollect the history of the time. But twelve days before, in the annual message of the 3d December, I had urged upon Congress the adoption of amendments to the Constitution of the same character with those subsequently proposed by Mr. Crittenden, called the "Crittenden Compromise." At that time high hopes were entertained throughout the country that these would be adopted. Besides, I believed, and this correctly, as the event proved, that Major Anderson was then in no danger of attack. Indeed he and his command were then treated with marked kindness by the authorities, and people of Charleston. Under these circumstances, to have sent such a force there would have been only to impair the hope of compromise, to provoke collision, and disappoint the country.

There are some details of this conversation in regard to which the General's memory must be defective. At present, I shall specify only one. I could not have stated that on a future contingent occasion I would telegraph "Major Anderson, of Fort Moultrie, to hold the Forts (Moultrie and Sumter) against attack;" because, with prudent precaution, this had already been done several days before, through a special messenger, sent to Major Anderson, for this very purpose. I refer to Major Buell, of the army.

The General's supplementary note of the same day, presenting to me General Jackson's conduct in 1833, during the period of nullification, as an example, requires no special notice. Even if the cases were not entirely different, I had previously determined upon a policy of my own, as will appear from my annual message. This was, at every hazard to collect the customs at Charleston, and outside of the port, if need be, in a vessel of war. Mr. Colcock, the existing collector, as I had anticipated, resigned his office about the end of December, and immediately thereafter I nominated to the Senate as his successor, a suitable person prepared at any personal risk to do his duty. That body, however, throughout its entire session declined to act on this nomination. Thus, without a collector, it was rendered impossible to collect the revenue.

IV. General Scott's statement alleges that "the Brooklyn, with Capt. Vodges's company alone, left the Chesapeake for Fort Pickens about January 22d, and on the 29th President Buchanan, having entered into a *quasi* armistice with certain leading seceders at Pensacola and elsewhere, caused Secretaries Holt and Toucey to instruct,

in a joint note, the commander of the war vessels off Pensacola, and Lieut. Slemmer, commanding Fort Pickens, to commit no act of hostility, and not to land Capt. Vogdes's company unless the Fort should be attacked." He afterwards states, within brackets, "That joint note I never saw, but suppose the armistice was consequent upon the meeting of the Peace Convention at Washington, and was understood to terminate with it."

These statements betray a singular want of memory on the part of General Scott. It is scarcely credible that this very joint note, presented in such odious colors, was submitted to General Scott on the day it was prepared, (29th January,) and met his entire approbation. I would not venture to make this assertion if I did not possess conclusive evidence to prove it. On that day Secretary Holt addressed me a note, from which the following is an extract: "*I have the satisfaction of saying, that on submitting the paper to General Scott, he expressed himself satisfied with it, saying that there could be no objection to the arrangement in a military point of view, or otherwise.*" This requires no comment. That the General had every reason to be satisfied with the arrangement, will appear from the following statement:

A revolutionary outbreak had occurred in Florida; the troops of the United States had been expelled from Pensacola and the adjacent navy yard; and Lieutenant Slemmer, of the artillery, with his brave little command, had been forced to take refuge in Fort Pickens, where he was in imminent danger every moment of being captured by a vastly superior force. Owing to the interruption of regular communications Secretary Holt did not receive information of these events until several days after their occurrence, and then through a letter addressed to a third person. He instantly informed the President of the fact, and reinforcements, provisions, and military stores were dispatched by the Brooklyn to Fort Pickens without a moment's unnecessary delay. She left Fortress Monroe on the 24th of January.

Well-founded apprehensions were, however, entertained at the time of her departure that the reinforcements, with the vessels of war at no great distance from Fort Pickens, could not arrive in time to defend it against the impending attack. In this state of suspense, and whilst Lieutenant Slemmer was in extreme peril, Senators Slidell, Hunter, and Bigler, received a telegraphic despatch from Senator Mallory, of Florida, dated at Pensacola, on the 28th

January, with the urgent request that they should lay it before the President. This despatch expressed an earnest desire to maintain the peace, as well as the most positive assurance that no attack would be made on Fort Pickens if the present status should be preserved. This proposal was carefully considered, both with a view to the safety of the fort, and to the unhappy effect which an actual collision either at that or any other point might produce on the Peace Convention then about to assemble at Washington. The result was that a joint despatch was carefully prepared by the Secretaries of War and Navy, accepting the proposal, with important modifications, which was transmitted by telegraph on the 29th January to Lieutenant Slemmer, and to the naval commanders near the station. It is too long for transcription; suffice it to say it was carefully guarded at every point for the security of the fort and its free communication with Washington.

The result was highly fortunate. The Brooklyn had a long passage. Although she left Fortress Monroe on the 24th January, she did not arrive at Pensacola until the 6th February. In the mean time, Fort Pickens, with Lieut. Slemmer, (whose conduct deserves high commendation,) and his brave little band, were placed, by virtue of this arrangement, in perfect security until an adequate force had arrived to defend it against any attack. The fort is still in our possession. Well might Gen. Scott have expressed his satisfaction with this arrangement. The General was correct in the supposition that this arrangement was to expire on the termination of the Peace Convention.

V. But we now come to an important period, when dates will be essentially necessary to disentangle the statement of Gen. Scott. The South Carolina Commissioners were appointed on the 22d, and arrived in Washington on the 27th December. The day after their arrival it was announced that Major Anderson had removed from Fort Moultrie to Fort Sumter. This rendered them furious. On the same day they addressed an angry letter to the President demanding the surrender of Fort Sumter. The President answered this letter on the 30th December by a peremptory refusal. This brought forth a reply from the Commissioners on the 2d January, 1861, of such an insulting character that the President instantly returned it to them with the following endorsement: "This paper, just presented to the President, is of such a character that he declines to receive it." From that time forward all friendly, political,

and personal intercourse finally ceased between the revolutionary Senators and the President, and he was severely attacked by them in the Senate, and especially by Mr. Jefferson Davis. Indeed, their intercourse had previously been of the coldest character ever since the President's anti-secession message at the commencement of the session of Congress.

Under these changed circumstances, Gen. Scott, by note on Sunday, the 30th December, addressed the following inquiry to the President :

"Will the President permit Gen. Scott, without reference to the War Department, and otherwise as secretly as possible, to send two hundred and fifty recruits from New York harbor to reinforce Fort Sumter, together with some extra muskets or rifles, ammunition, and subsistence? It is hoped that a sloop of war and cutter may be ordered for the same purpose to-morrow."

The General seems not to have then known that Mr. Floyd was out of office.

Never did a request meet a more prompt compliance. It was received on Sunday evening, December 30th. On Monday morning I gave instructions to the War and Navy Departments, and on Monday evening Gen. Scott came to congratulate me that the Secretaries had issued the necessary orders to the army and navy officers, and that they were in his possession. The Brooklyn, with troops, military stores, and provisions, was to sail forthwith from Fortress Monroe for Fort Sumter. I am therefore utterly at a loss to imagine why the General, in his statement, should have asserted that "the South Carolina Commissioners had already been many days in Washington and no movement of defence (on the part of the United States) was permitted." These Commissioners arrived in Washington on the 27th December; Gen. Scott's request was made to the President on the 30th. It was complied with on the 31st, and a single day is all that represents the "many days" of the General.

Again, General Scott asserts, in the face of these facts, that the President refused to allow any attempt to be made—to reinforce Fort Sumter—because he was holding negotiations with the South Carolina Commissioners. And still again, that "afterwards Secretary Holt and myself endeavored, in vain, to obtain a ship-of-war for the purpose, and were finally obliged to employ the passenger steamer 'Star of the West.'" Will it be believed that the substi-

tution of the "Star of the West," for the powerful steamer Brooklyn, of which he now complains, was by the advice of Gen. Scott himself? I have never heard this doubted until I read the statement.

At the interview already referred to between the General and myself, on the evening of Monday the 31st of December, I suggested to him that, although I had not received the South Carolina Commissioners in their official capacity, but merely as private gentlemen, yet it might be considered an improper act to send the Brooklyn with reinforcements to Fort Sumter until I had received an answer from them to my letter of the preceding day; that the delay could not continue more than forty-eight hours. He promptly concurred in this suggestion as gentlemanly and proper, and the orders were not transmitted to the Brooklyn on that evening. My anticipations were correct, for on the morning of the 2d of January I received their insolent note, and sent it back to them. In the mean time, however, the General had become convinced, by the representations of a gentleman whom I forbear to name, that the better plan, as the Secretaries of War and the Navy informed me, to secure secrecy and success and reach the fort, would be to send a fast, side-wheel, mercantile steamer from New York with the reinforcement. Accordingly the "Star of the West" was selected for this duty. The substitution of this mercantile steamer for the Brooklyn, which would have been able to defend herself in case of attack, was reluctantly yielded by me to the high military judgment of General Scott.

The change of programme required a brief space of time; but the "Star of the West" left New York for Charleston on the evening of the 5th of January. On the very day, however, when this ill-fated steamer left New York, a telegram was despatched by Gen. Scott to Col. Scott to countermand her departure; but it did not reach its destination until after she had gone to sea. The reason for this countermand shall be stated in the language of Secretary Holt, to be found in a letter addressed by him to Mr. Thompson, the late Secretary of the Interior on the 5th of March, 1861, and published in the National Intelligencer. Mr. Holt says:

"The countermand spoken of (by Mr. Thompson) was not more cordially sanctioned by the President than it was by General Scott and myself; not because of any dissent from the order on the part of the President, but because of a letter received that day from Major Anderson, stating, in effect, that he regarded himself secure in his position; and yet more from intelligence which late on Sat-

urday evening (5th January, 1861) reached the Department, that a heavy battery had been erected among the sand hills at the entrance to Charleston Harbor, which would probably destroy any unarmed vessel (and such was the "Star of the West") which might attempt to make its way to Fort Sumter. This important information satisfied the Government that there was no present necessity for sending reinforcements, and that when sent they should go, not in a vessel of commerce, but of war. Hence the countermand was despatched by telegraph to New York; but the vessel had sailed a short time before it reached the officer (Col. Scott) to whom it was addressed."

A statement of these facts, established by dates, proves conclusively that the President was not only willing but anxious in the briefest period to reinforce Fort Sumter.

On the 4th January, the day before the departure of the *Star of the West* from New York, as General Scott in his statement admits, succor was sent to Fort Taylor, Key West, and to Fort Jefferson, Tortugas Island, which reached these points in time for their security. He nevertheless speculates on the consequences which might have followed had the reinforcements not reached their destination in due time, and even expresses the extraordinary opinion that, with the possession of these Forts, "the rebels might have purchased an early recognition."

I shall next advert to the statement that the expedition under Captain Ward, "of three or four small steamers belonging to the Coast Survey," was kept back by something like a truce or armistice, [made here], embracing Charleston and Pensacola harbors, agreed upon between the late President and certain principal seceders of South Carolina, Florida, Louisiana, &c. "And this truce lasted to the end of the Administration." Things altogether distinct in their nature are so often blended in this statement that it is difficult to separate them. Such is eminently the case in connecting the facts relative to Charleston with Pensacola.

Having already treated of the charge of having kept back reinforcements from Pensacola, I shall now say something of the charge of having also kept them back from Charleston. Neither a truce, nor quasi truce, nor anything like it, was ever concluded between the President and any human authority concerning Charleston. On the contrary, the South Carolina Commissioners, first and last, and all the time, were informed that the President could never surrender Fort Sumter, nor deprive himself of the most entire liberty to send reinforcements to it whenever it was believed to be in danger,

or requested by Major Anderson. It is strange that General Scott was not apprised of this well-known fact. It was then, with some astonishment, that I learned from the statement of the General that he had, on the 12th March, 1861, advised that Major Anderson should be instructed to evacuate the fort as soon as suitable transportation could be procured to carry himself and his command to New York. A military necessity for a capitulation may have existed in case there should be an attack upon the fort, or a demand for its surrender; but surely none such could have existed for its voluntary surrender and abandonment.

Probably that to which the General means to refer was not the quasi, but the actual truce of arms concluded at Charleston on the 11th January, 1861, between Governor Pickens and Major Anderson, without the knowledge of the President. It was on the 9th of January that the *Star of the West*, under the American flag, was fired upon in the harbor of Charleston, by order of Governor Pickens. Immediately after this outrage, Major Anderson sent a flag to the Governor, stating that he presumed the act had been unauthorized, and for that reason he had not opened fire from Fort Sumter on the adjacent batteries; but demanding its disavowal, and, if this were not sent in a reasonable time, he would consider it war, and fire on any vessel that attempted to leave the harbor. Two days after this occurrence, on the 11th January, Governor Pickens had the audacity to demand of Major Anderson the surrender of the fort. In his answer of the same date the Major made the following proposition: "Should your Excellency deem fit, previous to a resort to arms, to refer this matter to Washington, it would afford me the sincerest pleasure to depute one of my officers to accompany any messenger you may deem proper to be the bearer of your demand." This proposition was promptly accepted by the Governor, and, in pursuance thereof, he sent on his part, Hon. J. W. Hayne, the Attorney General of South Carolina, to Washington, whilst Major Anderson deputed Lieut. Hall, of the United States Army, to accompany him. These gentlemen arrived together in Washington on the evening of the 13th of January, when the President obtained the first knowledge of the transaction. But it will be recollected that no time intervened between the return of the *Star of the West* to New York and the arrival of the messenger bearing a copy of the truce at Washington, within which it would have been possible to

send reinforcements to Fort Sumter. Both events occurred about the same time.

Thus, a truce or suspension of arms was concluded between the parties, to continue until the question of the surrender of the fort should be decided by the President. Until this decision Major Anderson had placed it out of his own power to ask for reinforcements, and equally out of the power of the Government to send them without a violation of public faith. This was what writers on public law denominate "a partial truce under which hostilities are suspended only in certain places, as between a town and the army besieging it." It is possible that the President, under the laws of war, might have annulled this truce upon due notice to the opposite party; but neither Gen. Scott nor any other person ever suggested this expedient. This would have been to cast a reflection on Major Anderson, who, beyond question, acted from the highest and purest motives. Did Gen. Scott ever propose to violate this truce during its existence? If he did, I am not now, and never was, aware of the fact. Indeed I think he would have been one of the last men in the world to propose such a measure.

Col. Hayne did not deliver the letter which he bore from Governor Pickens, demanding the surrender of the fort, to the President until the 31st of January. The documents containing the reasons for this worrying delay were communicated to Congress in a special message of the 8th of February, to which I refer the reader. On the 5th of February the Secretary of War, under the instructions of the President, gave a peremptory refusal to this demand in an able and comprehensive letter, reviewing the whole subject, explaining and justifying the conduct of the President throughout. Its concluding sentence is both eloquent and emphatic:

"If (says Mr. Holt,) with all the multiplied proofs which exist of the President's anxiety for peace, and of the earnestness with which he has pursued it, the authorities of that State shall assault Fort Sumter and imperil the lives of the handful of brave and loyal men shut up within its walls, and thus plunge our country into the horrors of civil war, then upon them and those they represent must rest the responsibility."

The truce was then ended, and General Scott is incorrect in stating "that it lasted to the end of that Administration."

An expedition was quietly fitted out at New York, under the supervision of General Scott, to be ready for any contingency. He arranged its details, and regarded the reinforcements thus provided

for as sufficient. This was ready to sail for Fort Sumter on five hours' notice. It is of this expedition that Gen. Scott thus speaks :

" At that time, when this (the truce) had passed away, Secretaries Holt and Toucey, Capt. Ward, of the navy, and myself, with the knowledge of the President, settled upon the employment, under the Captain, of three or four steamers belonging to the Coast Survey, but he was kept back by the truce."

A strange inconsistency. The truce had expired with Mr. Holt's letter to Col. Hayne on the 5th of February, and Gen. Scott in his statement says " it would have been easy to reinforce this fort down to about the 12th of February." Why, then, did not the reinforcements proceed ? This was simply because of communications from Major Anderson. It was most fortunate that they did not proceed ; because the three or four small steamers which were to bear them would never have reached the fort, and in the attempt must have been captured or destroyed. The vast inadequacy of the force provided to accomplish the object was demonstrated by information received from Major Anderson at the War Department on the last day of the Administration.

I purposely forbear at present to say more on this subject, lest I might, however unintentionally, do injustice to one or more of the parties concerned, in consequence of the brevity required by the nature of this communication. The facts relating to it, with the appropriate accompaniments, have been fully presented in a historical review, prepared a year ago, which will ere long be published. This review contains a sketch of the four last months of my Administration. It is impartial ; at least such is my honest conviction. That it has not yet been published has arisen solely from an apprehension, no longer entertained, that something therein might be unjustly perverted into an interference with the Government in a vigorous prosecution of the war for the maintenance of the Constitution and the restoration of the Union, which was far, very far, from my intention.

After a careful retrospect, I can solemnly declare before God and my country that I cannot reproach myself with any act of commission or omission since the existing troubles commenced. I have never doubted that my countrymen would yet do me justice. In my special message of the 8th of January, 1861, I presented a full and fair exposition of the alarming condition of the country, and urged Congress either to adopt measures of compromise, or, failing

in this, to prepare for the last alternative. In both aspects my recommendation was disregarded. I shall close this document with a quotation of the last sentences of that message, as follows :

"In conclusion it may be permitted me to remark that I have often warned my countrymen of the dangers which now surround us. This may be the last time I shall refer to the subject officially. I feel that my duty has been faithfully, though it may be imperfectly, performed ; and whatever the result may be, I shall carry to my grave the consciousness that I at least meant well for my country."

Your obedient servant,

JAMES BUCHANAN.

Wheatland, near Lancaster, October 28, 1862.

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